
TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR CHAPTER 2

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND POPULATION CHANGE IN THE UNITED STATES	43
ABSTRACT	43
INTRODUCTION	44
THE CENSUS OF 1990: A COUNT OF THE FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION	44
POPULATION ESTIMATES	45
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION BETWEEN 1990 AND 1995.....	45
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION BETWEEN 1995 AND 1997.....	45
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AS A COMPONENT OF STATE POPULATION CHANGE.....	45
POPULATION PROJECTIONS	50
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION BETWEEN 1998 AND 2002.....	50
METHODOLOGY	50
METHODOLOGY FOR DECENNIAL CENSUSES	50
POPULATION ESTIMATES METHODOLOGY	52
POPULATION PROJECTION METHODOLOGY	53
COMPARISONS OF THE NATIVE AND FOREIGN-BORN POPULATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1997	54
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	54
SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS	54
ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS.....	55
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR CHAPTER 2	56

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1	State Population Estimates, Population Change, and Net Migration: 1990 to 1995.....	46
Table 2-2	State Population Estimates, Population Change, and Net Migration: 1995 to 1997.....	48
Table 2-3	Components of Population Change for the Six Major International Migration Destination States: July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1997.....	50
Table 2-4	State Population Projections, Projected Change, and Projected Net Migration: 1998 to 2002.....	51

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International Migration and Population Change in the United States

Abstract

In 1990 there were 20 million foreign-born people residing in the United States; by 1997, the foreign-born population had increased by 30 percent to total 26 million. These new arrivals have had an uneven effect on State population trends; about three-fourths of those who arrived during the 1990's settled in just six States. During the next 5 years, migration from abroad is projected to account for approximately 4.1 million new U.S. residents, or 44 percent of national population growth.

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Introduction

International migration has been a key element of population change in the United States. Different analytical methods and data sources provide varying images, but all evidence to date indicates that the size, composition, and distribution of both the nation's and the States' populations have been vitally affected by the dual processes of international and domestic migration. In the next decade, changes in the determinants and consequences of these processes will involve many factors, including policy decisions; however, current patterns are likely to persist.¹

The Census of 1990: A Count of the Foreign-Born Population

The 1990 census counted 19.8 million foreign-born people in the United States, indicating that 8 percent of the nation's population were born abroad to non-citizen parents.² The majority of these international migrants (73 percent) were living in one of six States:

- California (6.5 million)
- New York (2.9 million)
- Florida (1.7 million)
- Texas (1.5 million)
- New Jersey (967,000)
- Illinois (952,000)

Six other States housed another 10 percent of the foreign-born:

- Massachusetts (574,000)
- Pennsylvania (369,000)
- Michigan (355,000)
- Washington (322,000)
- Maryland (313,000)
- Virginia (312,000)

More than 4 of every 5, or about 85 percent, of the foreign-born population resided in one of the above 12 States. See Table 2-1.

In five States, the foreign-born population constituted more than 10 percent of the total population:

- California (21.7 percent)
- New York (15.9 percent)
- Hawaii (14.7 percent)
- Florida (12.9 percent)
- New Jersey (12.5 percent)

¹ Statistics for this report were derived from: 1) 1990 Census of Population; 2) estimates of the resident population of states, July 1, 1990, to July 1, 1997; 3) projections of the State populations for 1998 to 2002. Full citations are listed at the end of the text. For more information about obtaining these sources, contact the U. S. Census Bureau's Statistical Information Office at (202) 457-2422 or e-mail pop@census.gov.

² Foreign-born people who are not legal permanent residents, such as executives of multinational corporations, refugees, students, and undocumented aliens, are included.

Population Estimates

International Migration Between 1990 and 1995

A total of 4 million migrants entered and remained in the United States between 1990 and 1995, or an average of 744,000 per year (all migration numbers in this report represent the net totals, unless otherwise noted). The arrivals were not evenly distributed throughout the nation, but rather tended to concentrate in areas where the foreign-born population already resided. One-third of all international migrants during this time period (1.2 million) went to California, which has by far the highest number of foreign-born residents. Another 16 percent of all international migrants (584,000) went to New York, which had the second highest foreign-born population. The other States that had large foreign-born populations, namely Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey, also had high numbers of international migrants during this time period (each received 185,000 or more). See Table 2-1.

International Migration Between 1995 and 1997

There were 1.8 million migrants added to the population of the United States from July 1, 1995 to July 1, 1997, or an average of 890,000 per year. This figure is 20 percent higher than the average from 1990 to 1995. The nation's total population grew by 1.9 percent during this 2-year span, or by 5 million people; international migrants constituted 36 percent of this population change. See Table 2-2.

The States that received the highest numbers of international migrants were the same as earlier in the decade. California received 26.9 percent of the international migrants (481,000), New York received 14.4 percent (257,000), and another 30.5 percent was split between Texas (185,000), Florida (174,000), New Jersey (103,000), and Illinois (83,000).

Two smaller States also received a large number of international migrants relative to their population size. The District of Columbia, with 552,000 residents in 1995, received 7,000 international migrants from 1995 to 1997. A similar situation took place in Nevada; the State was home to 1.5 million people in 1995, and 15,000 international migrants arrived from 1995 to 1997.

International Migration as a Component of State Population Change

A degree of complexity is added when sub-national population change is examined, because people move between States.³ There are two kinds of migration: international (from abroad) and domestic.⁴ Between 1995 and 1997, every State experienced a positive flow of international migrants; however, the pattern across individual States was not uniform. California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas received the largest share of international migrants. Between 1995 and 1997, 72 percent of the migrants from abroad settled in these six States.

³ For a discussion of the methodology used to allocate the international migration flow to States and internal migration flows between States, see the U. S. Bureau of the Census (1992).

⁴ Note that the domestic migration estimates sum to zero at the national level.

**Table 2-1 — State Population Counts and Estimates, Population Change, and Net Migration:
1990 to 1995 (in Thousands)**

State	Population Count April 1, 1990			Population Estimate July 1, 1995	Population Change 1990 - 1995		Net Migration 1990 - 1995	
	Total	Foreign Born	Percent Foreign Born		Number	Percent	Domestic	Inter- national ¹
United States	248,765	19,767	7.9	262,765	14,000	5.6	0	3,719
Alabama	4,040	44	1.1	4,270	230	5.7	81	7
Alaska	550	25	4.5	602	52	9.4	(7)	4
Arizona	3,665	278	7.6	4,307	642	17.5	312	55
Arkansas	2,351	25	1.1	2,480	129	5.5	78	5
California	29,786	6,459	21.7	31,472	1,686	5.7	(1,569)	1,209
Colorado	3,294	142	4.3	3,738	444	13.5	247	29
Connecticut	3,287	279	8.5	3,262	(25)	(0.8)	(152)	33
Delaware	666	22	3.3	719	53	7.9	19	4
District of Columbia	607	59	9.7	552	(54)	(9.0)	(87)	16
Florida	12,938	1,663	12.9	14,180	1,242	9.6	613	282
Georgia	6,478	173	2.7	7,189	710	11.0	346	48
Hawaii	1,108	163	14.7	1,183	75	6.8	(38)	30
Idaho	1,007	29	2.9	1,164	157	15.6	98	8
Illinois	11,431	952	8.3	11,866	435	3.8	(296)	190
Indiana	5,544	94	1.7	5,787	242	4.4	65	12
Iowa	2,777	43	1.6	2,841	64	2.3	2	9
Kansas	2,478	63	2.5	2,575	97	3.9	(11)	12
Kentucky	3,687	34	0.9	3,856	169	4.6	63	7
Louisiana	4,222	87	2.1	4,328	106	2.5	(59)	14
Maine	1,228	36	3.0	1,233	5	0.4	(20)	2
Maryland	4,781	313	6.6	5,023	243	5.1	(18)	57
Massachusetts	6,016	574	9.5	6,058	41	0.7	(190)	77
Michigan	9,295	355	3.8	9,663	368	4.0	(130)	42
Minnesota	4,376	113	2.6	4,605	229	5.2	50	25
Mississippi	2,575	20	0.8	2,690	115	4.5	30	3
Missouri	5,117	84	1.6	5,337	220	4.3	59	17
Montana	799	14	1.7	868	69	8.7	47	2
Nebraska	1,578	28	1.8	1,635	57	3.6	6	7
Nevada	1,202	105	8.7	1,528	327	27.2	230	21
New Hampshire	1,109	41	3.7	1,146	37	3.3	(2)	3
New Jersey	7,748	967	12.5	7,962	215	2.8	(214)	185
New Mexico	1,515	81	5.3	1,684	169	11.1	62	19
New York	17,991	2,852	15.9	18,145	154	0.9	(1,024)	584
North Carolina	6,632	115	1.7	7,186	553	8.3	275	26
North Dakota	639	9	1.5	641	3	0.4	(15)	2
Ohio	10,847	260	2.4	11,138	291	2.7	(51)	25
Oklahoma	3,146	65	2.1	3,271	126	4.0	30	13
Oregon	2,842	139	4.9	3,141	299	10.5	178	32
Pennsylvania	11,883	369	3.1	12,040	157	1.3	(82)	55
Rhode Island	1,003	95	9.5	989	(14)	(1.4)	(46)	8

**Table 2-1 — State Population Counts and Estimates, Population Change, and Net Migration:
1990 to 1995 (in Thousands) (Continued)**

State	Population Count April 1, 1990			Population Estimate July 1, 1995	Population Change 1990 - 1995		Net Migration 1990 - 1995	
	Total	Foreign Born	Percent Foreign Born		Number	Percent	Domestic	Inter- national ¹
South Carolina	3,486	50	1.4	3,699	213	6.1	48	8
South Dakota	696	8	1.1	735	39	5.5	14	2
Tennessee	4,877	59	1.2	5,235	358	7.3	216	14
Texas	16,986	1,524	9.0	18,694	1,708	10.1	345	354
Utah	1,723	59	3.4	1,991	269	15.6	72	13
Vermont	563	18	3.1	582	20	3.5	3	2
Virginia	6,189	312	5.0	6,602	412	6.7	55	67
Washington	4,867	322	6.6	5,433	566	11.6	263	64
West Virginia	1,793	16	0.9	1,822	28	1.6	21	2
Wisconsin	4,892	122	2.5	5,137	245	5.0	75	13
Wyoming	454	8	1.7	478	25	5.5	7	1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. *State Population Estimates and Demographic Components of Population Change, Annual Time Series*, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1998 (includes April, 1990 census population counts) [ST-98-7].

Note: Negative numbers are given in parentheses.

¹Federal United States. citizen and Puerto Rican movement are excluded. Emigration is subtracted indirectly, as these estimates reflect the U.S. resident population.

**Table 2-2 — State Population Estimates, Population Change, and Net Migration:
1995 to 1997 (in Thousands)**

State	Population Estimate July 1, 1995	Population Estimate July 1, 1996	Population Estimate July 1, 1997	Population Change 1995 - 1997		Net Migration 1995 - 1997	
				Number	Percent	Domestic	Inter- national ¹
United States	262,765	265,190	267,744	4,979	1.9	0	1,788
Alabama	4,270	4,291	4,322	52	1.2	20	3
Alaska	602	605	610	8	1.3	(10)	2
Arizona	4,307	4,432	4,553	246	5.7	142	26
Arkansas	2,480	2,505	2,523	43	1.7	22	3
California	31,472	31,762	32,182	710	2.3	(407)	481
Colorado	3,738	3,814	3,892	154	4.1	74	18
Connecticut	3,262	3,264	3,267	5	0.2	(42)	19
Delaware	719	727	735	16	2.3	6	2
District of Columbia	552	540	530	(23)	(4.1)	(34)	7
Florida	14,180	14,425	14,677	497	3.5	246	174
Georgia	7,189	7,334	7,490	301	4.2	163	26
Hawaii	1,183	1,187	1,192	9	0.8	(26)	13
Idaho	1,164	1,186	1,209	45	3.9	21	4
Illinois	11,866	11,934	11,989	123	1.0	(133)	87
Indiana	5,787	5,827	5,865	78	1.4	11	8
Iowa	2,841	2,849	2,854	14	0.5	(9)	6
Kansas	2,575	2,585	2,601	27	1.0	(9)	7
Kentucky	3,856	3,883	3,910	54	1.4	18	4
Louisiana	4,328	4,340	4,354	25	0.6	(33)	6
Maine	1,233	1,238	1,242	9	0.7	4	1
Maryland	5,023	5,058	5,095	71	1.4	(25)	37
Massachusetts	6,058	6,083	6,114	57	0.9	(25)	33
Michigan	9,663	9,734	9,780	117	1.2	(26)	29
Minnesota	4,605	4,648	4,687	82	1.8	17	13
Mississippi	2,690	2,710	2,732	41	1.5	11	2
Missouri	5,337	5,369	5,408	71	1.3	31	9
Montana	868	877	879	10	1.2	3	1
Nebraska	1,635	1,648	1,657	22	1.3	2	4
Nevada	1,528	1,600	1,679	150	9.8	108	15
New Hampshire	1,146	1,160	1,172	26	2.3	14	2
New Jersey	7,962	8,008	8,058	96	1.2	(85)	103
New Mexico	1,684	1,708	1,724	40	2.4	1	10
New York	18,145	18,142	18,146	1	0.0	(451)	257
North Carolina	7,186	7,309	7,431	245	3.4	149	14
North Dakota	641	643	641	(0)	(0.1)	(6)	1
Ohio	11,138	11,170	11,193	55	0.5	(51)	15
Oklahoma	3,271	3,296	3,322	50	1.5	15	8
Oregon	3,141	3,195	3,243	102	3.3	57	16
Pennsylvania	12,040	12,034	12,011	(28)	(0.2)	(93)	28
Rhode Island	989	988	987	(2)	(0.2)	(12)	4
South Carolina	3,699	3,737	3,788	89	2.4	39	5

**Table 2-2 — State Population Estimates, Population Change, and Net Migration:
1995 to 1997 (in Thousands) (Continued)**

State	Population Estimate July 1, 1995	Population Estimate July 1, 1996	Population Estimate July 1, 1997	Population Change 1995 - 1997		Net Migration 1995 - 1997	
				Number	Percent	Domestic	Inter- national ¹
South Dakota	735	737	738	3	0.4	(5)	1
Tennessee	5,235	5,307	5,372	137	2.6	85	8
Texas	18,694	19,033	19,386	691	3.7	119	185
Utah	1,991	2,022	2,065	74	3.7	17	8
Vermont	582	586	589	6	1.1	2	1
Virginia	6,602	6,667	6,737	136	2.1	15	39
Washington	5,433	5,519	5,614	181	3.3	74	35
West Virginia	1,822	1,820	1,815	(6)	(0.4)	(7)	1
Wisconsin	5,137	5,174	5,201	64	1.3	10	5
Wyoming	478	480	480	2	0.4	(4)	1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. State Population Estimates and Demographic Components of Population Change, Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1998 [ST-98-7].

Note: Negative numbers are given in parentheses.

¹Federal U.S. citizen and Puerto Rican movement are excluded. Emigration is subtracted indirectly, as these estimates reflect the U. S. resident population.

Table 2-3 shows that between July 1, 1990 and July 1, 1997, four of the six States gaining the largest shares of foreign migrants also sustained notable losses of domestic migrants. For example, although California had a gain of 1.7 million international migrants, it lost almost 2.0 million domestic migrants. The other three States with high international migration gain and domestic migration losses (New York, Illinois and New Jersey) were similar; they lost more population to domestic migration than they gained in international migration. For example, New York gained 826,000 international migrants, but lost 1.5 million residents to domestic migration. Between 1990 and 1997, Illinois lost more people to domestic migration than it gained from international migration. New Jersey sustained a loss of domestic migrants that nearly equaled the gain of foreign migrants to the State.

Although it is unclear what proportion of these domestic out-migrants are international migrants moving on to other States, it is clear where they are moving. Domestic migrants are heading for States in the South and West; Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Tennessee each gained between 200,000 and 700,000 domestic migrants, while Washington, Colorado, and Nevada each gained between 200,000 and 300,000 domestic migrants.

Two of the six States with high international migration gain had positive domestic migration as well. Florida's population increased by around 1.7 million people from 1990 to 1997, and domestic migration was the most important factor in that change. Births outnumbered deaths by only 324,000, but 859,000 people were added due to domestic migration (compared with 454,000 due to international migration). Population growth in Texas of 2.3 million people was due to natural increase (1.3 million) and domestic and international migration (500,000 each). See Table 2-3.

Between 1990 and 1997, about one-fourth of the nation's growth (23.9 percent) occurred in Florida and Texas. New York received more migrants from abroad than Texas, but domestic migration losses for New York allowed Texas to replace it as the second most populous State, behind California.

Table 2-3 — Components of Population Change for the Six Major International Migration Destination States:
July 1, 1990, to July 1, 1997 (in Thousands)

State	Population Change	Births	Deaths	Domestic Migration	Net International Migration	Residual Change ¹
California	2,257	4,030	1,536	(1,975)	1,687	51
Florida	1,659	1,345	1,021	859	454	22
Illinois	543	1,322	737	(429)	275	112
New Jersey	301	823	507	(299)	283	0
New York	144	1,953	1,169	(1,475)	826	9
Texas	2,341	2,267	936	464	538	8

Note: Negative numbers are given in parentheses.

¹Subnational estimates are constrained to sum to an independently derived estimate of the national population. The residual is the difference between an area's population as estimated by the sub-national population estimation procedure before and after imposing this constraint. In this table, federal U.S. citizen and Puerto Rican movement have been included in "residual change."

Population Projections

International Migration Between 1998 and 2002

The population of the United States is expected to reach 279 million by the year 2002. The change since 1998 from all components will be about 9.2 million people. The contribution to population growth of migration from abroad will be about 4.1 million, or roughly 1.5 percent of the 1998 population. International migration will count for around 44 percent of total population change in the United States. See Table 2-4 (and the Population Projection Methodology section for a discussion of how these projections were derived).

Through the first few years of the 21st century, the same six States are expected to continue to be the primary destinations for migrants from abroad. California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Florida will probably receive about 72 percent of the foreign migrant population. California alone will probably accommodate more than one-third of the new additions (1.5 million). However, migration from abroad is not expected to match the outward movement of domestic migrants (-1.9 million) from California during this same period.

Methodology

Methodology for Decennial Censuses

Every 10 years the Census Bureau conducts a census of the U.S. population, collecting information about people residing in each State, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and outlying areas. Census questionnaires are sent to every housing unit. Residents of housing units are counted and included in the total population count, along with residents of group quarters, such as college dormitories, prisons, and nursing homes. The military population is counted either in on-base or off-base housing.⁵

⁵ In 1990, certain segments of the overseas population (U. S. Armed Forces personnel, civilian U. S. Federal employees, and dependents of both groups) were allocated to their home States and included in the populations of those States for apportionment purposes only. For a brief description of the apportionment process, see "Population Trends and Congressional Apportionment." 1990 Census Profile. March 1991.

The numbers appearing in the first column of Table 2-1 reflect the resident population of the United States from the 1990 census.⁶ People from foreign countries and citizens from U.S. territories, including the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, were counted as members of the U.S. resident population if they lived in the 50 States or the District of Columbia on April 1, 1990.

Foreign-born status is determined from the answers to two census questions. The first question asks, "In what U.S. State or foreign country was this person born?"⁷ If the person was born abroad, then the next question is used to determine whether or not they will be classified as foreign born. The next question asks, "Is this person a citizen of the United States?" If a person indicates "Yes, U.S. citizen by naturalization," or "No, not a citizen of the United States" then they are classified as foreign-born. The second question is necessary since not all people born abroad are included in the foreign-born population. For example, a child born in Germany of U.S. parents or a child born in Puerto Rico is a U.S. citizen at birth and excluded from the foreign-born category. The 1990 count of the foreign-born population in Table 2-1 is the sum of people who resided in the 50 States and the District of Columbia on April 1, 1990, and who met the above criteria for foreign-born status.

**Table 2-4 — State Population Projections, Projected Change, and Projected Net Migration:
1998 to 2002 (in Thousands)**

State	Population Projection July 1, 1998	Population Projection July 1, 2002	Projected Population Change 1998 - 2002		Projected Net Migration 1998 - 2002	
			Number	Percent	Domestic	International ¹
United States	270,002	279,189	9,187	3.4	0	4,056
Alabama	4,374	4,525	152	3.5	105	11
Alaska	634	672	38	6.0	(3)	5
Arizona	4,575	4,990	415	9.1	304	49
Arkansas	2,574	2,683	108	4.2	99	5
California	32,100	33,138	1,038	3.2	(1,887)	1,477
Colorado	4,009	4,304	295	7.3	213	23
Connecticut	3,282	3,292	10	0.3	(110)	50
Delaware	749	783	34	4.5	23	4
District of Columbia	532	522	(10)	(1.9)	(50)	22
Florida	14,812	15,650	837	5.7	597	315
Georgia	7,616	8,108	492	6.5	330	51
Hawaii	1,228	1,289	62	5.0	(10)	31
Idaho	1,276	1,407	131	10.3	113	6
Illinois	11,966	12,136	170	1.4	(302)	167
Indiana	5,954	6,122	168	2.8	68	18
Iowa	2,878	2,919	41	1.4	(3)	13
Kansas	2,628	2,706	78	3.0	14	17
Kentucky	3,943	4,040	97	2.5	52	11
Louisiana	4,391	4,465	73	1.7	(50)	14
Maine	1,252	1,268	16	1.3	(1)	3
Maryland	5,189	5,354	165	3.2	(33)	97
Massachusetts	6,151	6,244	93	1.5	(144)	131
Michigan	9,634	9,716	82	0.9	(188)	50

⁶ These census numbers exclude the U.S. population living in places other than the 50 States and the District of Columbia.

**Table 2-4 — State Population Projections, Projected Change, and Projected Net Migration:
1998 to 2002 (in Thousands) (Continued)**

State	Population Projection July 1, 1998	Population Projection July 1, 2002	Projected Population Change 1998 - 2002		Projected Net Migration 1998 - 2002	
			Number	Percent	Domestic	International ¹
Minnesota	4,746	4,905	159	3.4	41	31
Mississippi	2,770	2,857	87	3.1	42	4
Missouri	5,457	5,616	159	2.9	86	17
Montana	919	975	56	6.1	50	2
Nebraska	1,679	1,729	50	3.0	21	5
Nevada	1,744	1,970	226	12.9	219	19
New Hampshire	1,197	1,249	52	4.4	31	5
New Jersey	8,091	8,262	171	2.1	(151)	185
New Mexico	1,792	1,925	134	7.5	87	4
New York	18,140	18,168	28	0.2	(1,020)	584
North Carolina	7,554	7,975	421	5.6	353	32
North Dakota	654	669	15	2.2	3	2
Ohio	11,260	11,369	109	1.0	(117)	39
Oklahoma	3,334	3,416	83	2.5	29	15
Oregon	3,299	3,488	189	5.7	144	33
Pennsylvania	12,158	12,238	80	0.7	(65)	60
Rhode Island	994	1,002	8	0.8	(27)	18
South Carolina	3,786	3,929	142	3.8	82	9
South Dakota	759	792	34	4.4	21	1
Tennessee	5,504	5,793	290	5.3	253	16
Texas	19,565	20,670	1,104	5.6	343	200
Utah	2,107	2,297	189	9.0	86	13
Vermont	605	627	22	3.6	14	1
Virginia	6,854	7,133	279	4.1	77	99
Washington	5,693	6,020	326	5.7	172	66
West Virginia	1,836	1,845	9	0.5	12	2
Wisconsin	5,249	5,394	144	2.8	50	22
Wyoming	507	542	35	6.9	26	1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Population Projections for States, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1995 to 2025. [PPL-47].

Note: Negative numbers are given in parentheses.

¹Federal U.S. citizen and Puerto Rican movement are excluded. Emigration is subtracted indirectly, as these estimates reflect the U.S. resident population.

Population Estimates Methodology

The Census Bureau produces postcensal estimates of the population by employing a “components of change” methodology. The resident population enumerated in the 1990 census (see Table 2-1) forms the base of the postcensal population estimates for the 1990’s. To this census base, for each estimate period, the births that occurred to U.S. resident women have been added, the deaths of U.S. residents subtracted, and the international migration and the movement of U.S. Armed Forces and federal citizens to the United States added. The estimates of international migration are based on administrative records. The

⁷ Respondents indicating they were born outside the United States are not asked if they entered the country “legally.”

INS supplies the Census Bureau with information on legal international migrants. The Office of Refugee Resettlement and the State Department supply the Census Bureau with data on people admitted to the United States as refugees.⁸

Two important types of international migration for which accurate and current data are unavailable are undocumented international migration and emigration (including the permanent emigration of legal residents). Undocumented international migrants are people who either engage in unauthorized movement across the national frontier or overstay a visitor permit or other nonimmigrant visa.⁹ Since 1990, the Census Bureau has added 225,000 people per year to its annual population estimates to account for undocumented population growth.¹⁰ Also, for the 1995-1997 time period, around 268,000 people per year (220,000 foreign-born and 48,000 natives) have been subtracted to cover the emigration of legal residents.¹¹

Many demographers calculate the contribution of migration to population change as a proportion, with net migration in the numerator and the sum of net change ([births minus deaths] plus [in-migration minus out-migration]) in the denominator. For example, to calculate the contribution of international migration between 1990 and 1997, divide 5.5 million ("International" totals from Tables 2-1 and 2-2) by 18.3 million ("Population Change" totals from Tables 2-1 and 2-2), and multiply by 100, to arrive at 30 percent.

Some demographers argue that this approach is flawed. First, the components are not mutually exclusive. Some international migrants die within a year of entering the country, and some newborn babies emigrate within a year of their birth. Second, if international migration is negative, but population change is positive (as it was in the 1930's), assessing the contribution of foreign migration with the traditional method has little meaning, as the numerator is a negative migration number, and the denominator is excess births.

Another approach that can be used to assess the contribution of international migration to population change is to compute a proportion, where international migration is the numerator and births and international migration (the two components that add population) are in the denominator. This approach currently produces a result of about 20 percent per annum at the national level, as each year the population adds about one international migrant for every four births.¹²

The 1990 population includes the international migrants who entered before 1990 and their progeny. Some demographers contend that to measure the effect of international migration on population change, one must consider the fertility of migrants, which would lead to higher estimates since fertility rates of new migrants initially exceed those of residents whose parents were also residents. In sum, various measures produce different results, and it is essential to consider policy context when characterizing the contribution of international migration to population change.

Population Projection Methodology

The Census Bureau developed a series of national and State population projections based on an array of assumptions about the components of change: fertility, life expectancy, and migration. The middle series of these projections is sometimes called the preferred series. Table 2-4 presents data based on the preferred series.¹³

⁸ A more complete discussion of the procedures used to develop postcensal population estimates can be found in several sources listed at the end of this review, including U.S. Bureau of the Census (1995).

⁹ And therefore have no currently valid paperwork associated with their presence.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the basic methodological approach and recent modifications, see U.S. Bureau of the Census (1995); Robinson, J.G. (1994); Passel, J. and K. Woodrow (1987); Woodrow, K. (1992); Woodrow, K. et al. (1987).

¹¹ See U.S. Bureau of the Census (1994b).

¹² See R. Warren (1994), J. Passel (1994).

¹³ See U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996b, 1994a). The population projection data used in this report are found in (1996a).

In the preferred series, it is assumed that migration at the national level will remain constant throughout the projection period at about 820,000 people per year (about 1,043,000 legal international migrants and 222,000 emigrants) and 225,000 undocumented migrants. These numbers reflect the changes in immigration law that took place in 1990 and current knowledge of emigration, undocumented migration, and movement to and from Puerto Rico.

Comparisons of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations in the United States in 1997

International migration has always been an important source of population growth and change in the United States. In recent years, the increased flow of people from abroad has renewed interest in the immigration process and the growth of the foreign-born population.

In these comparisons, data from the March 1997 Current Population Survey (CPS) are used to describe the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of native and foreign-born populations in the United States.¹⁴ Foreign-born naturalized citizens, foreign-born noncitizens, and natives are compared in terms of age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, residence, marital status, educational attainment, labor force participation, poverty, and use of selected public programs. The type, size, and income of households are also noted.¹⁵

The findings suggest that the native and foreign-born populations in the United States are, in many ways, dissimilar. However, their differences range from complex to superficial. Moreover, neither group is a homogeneous entity; many distinctions exist, particularly between naturalized citizens and noncitizens. Quite often, the characteristics of the native population are similar to those of one or more of various foreign-born groups.

Demographic Characteristics

In March 1997, one-third of the 26 million foreign-born people in the United States were naturalized citizens and two-thirds were noncitizens. Hispanics (who may be of any race) accounted for 44 percent of the foreign-born population; Asians and Pacific Islanders accounted for 24 percent. Together, these groups accounted for 68 percent of the foreign-born population but only 9 percent of the native population (about 2 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders were of Hispanic origin). In 1997, 94.4 percent of the foreign-born population lived in metropolitan areas compared with 78.9 percent of the native population. The median ages of the foreign-born population (37) and the native population (34) did not differ greatly, but their age distributions differed considerably. In the foreign-born population 10 percent were under 18 years of age and 44 percent were age 25 to 44, whereas the corresponding proportions in the native population were 28 percent and 30 percent. The sex ratio (males per 100 females) was 101 for the foreign-born population and 95 for the native population.

Social Characteristics

In 1997, 1 of every 11 households in the United States was headed by a foreign-born person (10.4 million). Forty-four percent of these households were headed by naturalized citizens (4.6 million), and the other 56 percent were headed by noncitizens (5.8 million). Of the 7.7 million married-couple families that included

¹⁴ See U.S. Bureau of the Census (1999).

¹⁵ A few points should be noted regarding the citizenship classification 1) many households contain a mixture of people with differing citizenship statuses; household-level citizenship status is classified by the citizenship status of the householder; 2) one should not use the terms naturalized citizen and noncitizen interchangeably with legal and illegal immigrant. A large proportion of the legally admitted foreign-born population was in a noncitizen status (refugee and/or in the country less than 5 years and therefore not yet eligible for application for citizenship, or in a nonimmigrant status such as student or exchange visitors). Furthermore, some noncitizens who are also legal international migrants may never seek U.S. citizenship; 3) the CPS does not ask questions about the legal status of foreign-born people.

at least one foreign-born spouse, 62 percent had both spouses foreign born, 22 percent had a foreign-born wife and a native husband, and 17 percent had a foreign-born husband and a native wife. The average size of families with a foreign-born householder was 3.8 compared to 3.1 for families with a native householder. The proportion of the population 25 years old and over who had completed high school or more education was lower among the foreign-born population (65 percent) than among the native population (84 percent). However, the proportion with a bachelor's degree or more education was 24 percent for both the foreign-born and native populations.

Economic Characteristics

Labor force participation in 1997 was higher for foreign-born men age 16 and older (78.8 percent) than for native men of this age group (73.6 percent), but the difference is due primarily to differences in age structure rather than differences in age-specific rates. Men aged 25 to 54, who had the highest participation rates, represented 65 percent of foreign-born men 16 years old and older, compared with 58 percent of native men 16 years old and older. For women, the labor force participation rate was lower among the foreign-born population (53 percent) than among the native population (61 percent), but here the difference is primarily due to age-specific participation rates. In the 25 to 54 year age span, the participation rates were 66 percent for foreign-born women and 78 percent for native women. The unemployment rate was higher for the foreign-born population (6.9 percent) than among the native population (5.4 percent). In 1996, median income for households with a foreign-born householder was \$30,000, compared with \$36,100 for households with a native householder. About 21 percent of the foreign-born population were in poverty, compared with 13 percent of the native population. About 39 percent of the foreign-born population under age 18 were in poverty compared with 20 percent of the native population of the same ages. Foreign-born households were more likely to use means-tested programs providing non-cash benefits, such as Medicaid, food stamps, or housing assistance (24 percent) than native households (17 percent).

Bibliography for Chapter 2

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